

Richard Leeke makes history in VW Rally

Richard Leeke broke a South African motorsport record by becoming the youngest-ever driver to win a national championship rally overall.



21-year-old Leeke and his 29-year-old co-driver, Henry Köhne, (the ATS Motorsport Young Guns), drove their Ford Fiesta to victory in the VW Rally, which ended in Port Elizabeth on Saturday, 22 July 2017. The pair was also dubbed the new overall leaders of the South African National Rally Championship.

The Eastern Cape event was the fourth round of the championship. The ATS Motorsport duo started relatively conservatively, keeping their S1600 class rivals within striking distance and ending the Friday just 14 seconds down on arch-rivals Guy Botterill and Simon Vacy-Lyle.

On Saturday the Young Guns won three of the six stages, including a dominant performance on the 22.6 kilometre PPC Jelly. Botterill/Vacy-Lyle bounced back a stage later with a strong performance on Culturama but their championship defence came to an end on the very next stage (the second running of PPC Jelly) when their car started to overheat, forcing their retirement.

"Right result at the right time"



However, there was still a lot of play for and the VW Polo of AC Potgieter and Nico Swartz was still in the fray. But the Young Guns comfortably won the penultimate timed section, to eventually end the event 34 seconds ahead of Potgieter/Swartz, with the Mazda2 of Chris Coertse and Greg Godrich completing the podium.

"We're ecstatic – this is exactly the right result at the right time," said Köhne. "It was a little intimidating being first on the road on Friday but we just kept our heads and took the view that Saturday was what mattered. It would've been easy to get over-excited and make a mistake...in rallying even small errors rapidly turn into big ones."

Added Leeke: "Saturday's stages were very fast in places and our Fiesta was handling brilliantly, with our recent suspension changes making it very stable at speed. We were able to keep the pressure on, and that's what this is about: you have to not only push yourself to the limit, but try force your rivals to go past theirs – both in terms of man and machine!"

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